

An Ossuary of the Neuter Nation between Stamford and St. David's, Ont. Report of Dr. A L Benedict to the Buffalo Historical Society. (Relics Exhibited, with popular lecture, May 10, 1908.)

The site mentioned in this report is on the principal Niagara escarpment, almost exactly at its brink, approximately five miles from Brock's Monument and the same distance from the steel arch bridge between Niagara Falls, Ont. and what was formerly Suspension Bridge N.Y. It is on the Berriman farm, about 1000 feet north-easterly from the low square house formerly occupied by this family.

The fact that an Indian burial ground existed here was discovered on Friday, April 24, in the course of excavation by Lowrey Bros. The personal investigation of this site occurred on Sunday, May 3/08. An approximately circular area of about 100 feet in diameter had been denuded of the surface soil—a sandy loam, darkened by vegetation &c—to the depth of one to two feet, in order to expose the gravel and sand lying beneath. The surface soil had been piled at one edge of this area and the subsoil represented the layer to which the burials ~~were made~~ penetrated. It had already been estimated that the area contained about 100 skeletons and this estimate seemed conservative. I counted at least a dozen skulls, many of them in fragments and human bones of all kinds, mainly in fragments strewn the present surface. Not only had many of the bones been deposited in the pile of surface dirt but local collectors had removed many bones and relics, including both stone-age and transition-period implements.

One plain clay pipe was dug up before me by a local collector the excavation being done so rapidly that it was impossible even to make out the attitude and direction of the skeleton with which it had been buried. The same collector had a clay pot, about 6 inches in diameter and of globular form, which he had exhumed a short time before. Another collector found a harpoon, apparently shaped from the ramus of the pubic bone of a small animal. About this was coiled a cord preserved by copper or brass.

This latter collector also showed me a red pipe-stone pipe of the familiar type, with horizontal, flattened stem and bowl set at an angle of about 100 degrees. This he claimed to have found in this burial place but in type, material and freshness of appearance it contrasted so markedly with the other relics found that, in my judgement and that of Dr. H. U. ~~Wickham~~ Williams who happened to be present, this statement was probably false. However, others stated that a similar pipe was found a few days previously.

So far as could be learned by hearsay, a considerable number of pipes, clay jars, brass kettles, beads of both aboriginal and European manufacture, chert arrow heads, iron tomahawks and various other articles of both ~~mx~~ stone age and transition-period had been gathered. One of the iron tomahawks was said to have been marked Hudson's Bay Co. One that I saw at the Stuart house bore no mark that could be seen in its corroded state.

The only skeleton whose position can be definitely stated was one that I exhumed on May 3/08, the skull having been found in situ by the youngest Stuart boy. This lay on its back, slightly inclined to the right side, the arms bent at the elbows and the hands on the chest, the knees pointing to the right, the legs bent back on the thighs with the feet in line with the back bone. The head lay to the east, the axis of the body being almost exactly in the east-to-west line. (See accompanying photograph by Mr. Plumstead.)

This skeleton lay in a damp mass of sand and was very badly decayed. At the north side of the neck was found a handful of small glass beads, with one long, light-blue cylindric bead. Fragments of a bead of similar texture, with longitudinal fracture, but of green tint, were found but crumbled immediately. A little to the north of the beads, was found a pottery jar in about 50 fragments. This was subsequently ~~x~~ glued together. This jar is elliptic in outline, with elevated ends bearing handles, only one of which was found. The jar bears rectilinear decorations about the neck. The total capacity is estimated at about 3 pints. Although the endeavor was made to preserve all fragments and though previous excavations had apparently not reached the level of this grave, this jar is incomplete and suggests that it was broken at the time of its deposit in the present grave. The position of the beads, at one side of the neck of the skeleton, also suggests that they were deposited in a mass at the time of a reinterment and this view is supported by the absence of some of the smaller bones, as of the wrist and ankle and foot.

Beside the beads and jar just mentioned, the following articles were acquired for my personal collection and are placed on exhibit as a loan, with the Buffalo Historical Society. Two large and four small pottery vessels; Ocean conch shell, two strings of glass beads, pipe stem and fragmentary bowl, perhaps belonging to the same pipe, two long shell ~~tubes~~ tubes made from columns of conch shells, two spiral ornaments and one ~~flat~~ flat ornament made from large shells, bought of George and Andrew Stuart who live near the site of the burial ground. Plain clay pipe and turtle shell decorated by prehistoric borings in a pattern following somewhat the natural division of the shell into segments, bought of a boy. Arrow head of chert, of the ordinary triangular Iroquois type, found by the youngest Stuart boy near the grave previously described. Rim of plain pottery jar, fragment of brass kettle, with portions of iron rim and bale, three imperfect skulls, found in the debris previously excavated.

Several other conch shells were found at this site, indicating a considerable trade with ocean or Gulf tribes or trade with Europe-



ans. Ocean shells were found in a smaller burial place at Point Abino, some twenty-five years ago and at this site, most of the implements were prehistoric. Indubitable evidences of prehistoric barter with distant tribes have been found in various places in America.

This (St. David's) burial site is in the territory known to have been occupied by the Neuter Nation and the large number of burials is also characteristic of this tribe, though not an inva~~ri~~able rule for this tribe nor unknown for other tribes. This tribe was practically annihilated by the confederated Iroquois (the Five Nations) and by the Hurons about 1650. The presence in the same grave of a native clay jar and European glass beads, indicates that the interment occurred comparatively soon after the beginning of trade with Europeans which, for this tribe, was probably about 1610. It is possible that some of the interments may have entirely antedated the beginning of European trade but it is more probable that the entire burial place was filled at one or a very few of the periods of mourning, with reinterment from temporary graves or scaffolds used in the interim. These periods are variously stated at three to ten years by different authorities. Thus it is possible to assign to this burial place a date between the comparatively close limits of 1600 and 1650.